

REMARKS

In the Official Action, the Examiner noted that the International Bureau did not provide the Japanese priority document. More substantively, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2 and 9-12 based on several prior grounds, but only objected to claims 3-8 and indicated that such claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In response to the points raised in the Action, applicants respectfully note that the Japanese priority document has submitted to the International Bureau and acknowledged as noted in the Form PCT/IB/304, a copy of which was provided with the instant application. Accordingly, it is up to the United States Patent and Trademark Office to obtain a copy of the priority document from the International Bureau. In this respect, PCT Rule 17.2 specifically states in relevant part:

(a) Where the applicant has complied with Rule 17.1(a) or (b), the International Bureau shall, at the specific request of the designated Office, promptly but not prior to the international publication of the international application, furnish a copy of the priority document to that Office. No such Office shall ask the applicant himself to furnish it with a copy.

Accordingly, applicants request that the International Bureau be contacted and that the Japanese priority document be acknowledged in the next Official Action. In addition, while applicants appreciate the acknowledgment of the documents provided in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on June 11, 2002, applicants also request acknowledgment of the Information Disclosure Statement that was submitted with the present application that identifies a single European document.

The present Amendment also makes various revisions in the specification and amends claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter from claim 8 (which has been canceled

without prejudice or disclaimer along with claim 3) with the claim language in other claims being revised to accommodate the amendment of claim 1 and the cancellation of claim 3. Since the current amendment resolves all substantive issues raised in the Official Action, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the present application.

Should the Examiner have any questions concerning the subject application, he is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

BURNS, DOANE, SWECKER & MATHIS, L.L.P.

By: Robert G. Mukai
Robert G. Mukai
Registration No. 28,531

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1404
(703) 836-6620

Date: July 28, 2003